United Nations CEDAW/C/CYP/CO/8

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Distr.: General
25 July 2018

Original: English

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Cyprus*

1. The Committee considered the eighth periodic report of Cyprus (CEDAW/C/CYP/8) at its 1604th and 1605th meetings (see CEDAW/C/SR.1604 and CEDAW/C/SR.1605), held on 4 July 2018. The Committee's list of issues and questions is contained in CEDAW/C/CYP/Q/8 and the responses of Cyprus are contained in CEDAW/C/CYP/Q/8/Add.1.

A. Introduction

2. The Committee appreciates the submission by the State party of its eighth periodic report. It also appreciates the State party's follow-up report (CEDAW/C/CYP/CO/6-7/Add.1) and its written replies to the list of issues and questions raised by the pre-sessional working group and welcomes the oral presentation by the delegation and the further clarifications provided in response to the questions posed orally by the Committee during the dialogue.

3. The Committee commends the State party on its delegation, which was headed by the Law Commissioner of the Republic of Cyprus, Leda Koursoumba, and included the Permanent Representative of Cyprus to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva, George Kasoulides, as well as representatives of the Ministry of Justice and Public Order; the Ministry of Education and Culture; the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance; the Ministry of the Interior; the Cyprus Police and the Permanent Mission of Cyprus to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva.

B. Positive aspects

4. The Committee welcomes the progress achieved since the consideration in 2013 of the State party's combined sixth and seventh periodic reports (CEDAW/C/CYP/6-7) in undertaking legislative reforms, in particular the adoption of the following:

(a) Amendment to section 169A of the Criminal Code decriminalizing abortion, in 2018;

* Adopted by the Committee at its seventieth session (2–20 July2018).

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(b) Paternity Leave Law of 2017 and Protection of Maternity (Amendment) Law of 2017;

(c) Violence in the Family (Prevention and Protection of Victims) (Amendment) Law of 2015;

(d) Civil Union Law of 2015, under which the right of lesbian, bisexual and transgender women to enter into same-sex civil unions and cohabitation is recognized;

(e) Equal Treatment of Men and Women in Employment and Vocational Training (Amendment) Law of 2014;

(f) Prevention and Combating of Trafficking in and Exploitation of Human Beings and Protection of Victims Law of 2014;

(g) Equal Pay for Men and Women for Equal Work or Work of Equal Value (Amendment) Law of 2014.

5. The Committee welcomes the State party's efforts to improve its institutional and policy framework aimed at accelerating the elimination of discrimination against women and promoting gender equality, such as the adoption or the creation of the following:

(a) National action plan on gender equality in education for the period 2018–2020;

(b) National action plan on the prevention and combating of family violence for the period 2017–2019;

(c) National action plan against trafficking in human beings for the period 2016–2018;

(d) Bi-communal technical committee on gender equality, in 2016;

(e) Strategic action plan on gender equality for the period 2014–2017;

(f) Office of the Commissioner for Gender Equality, in 2014.

6. The Committee welcomes the fact that, in the period since the consideration of the previous report, the State party has ratified or acceded to the following international and regional instruments:

(a) The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure, in 2017;

(b) The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), in 2017;

(c) The Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, in 2015.

C. Factors and difficulties preventing the effective implementation of the Convention

7. The Committee is aware that the State party does not exercise control over all parts of its territory and is thus unable to ensure the practical realization of women's rights in areas not under its effective control. It remains, however, concerned that the political situation in the State party continues to pose a challenge to the implementation of the Convention and recommends that it undertake an impact assessment of the protracted conflict and the continued division of the State party on the enjoyment by women and girl of their rights.

D. Sustainable Development Goals

8. The Committee welcomes the international support for the Sustainable Development Goals and calls for the realization of *de jure* and *de facto* (substantive) gender equality, in accordance with the provisions of the Convention, throughout the process of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Committee recalls the importance of Goal 5 and the mainstreaming of the principles of equality and non-discrimination throughout all 17 Goals. It urges the State party to recognize women as a driving force of the sustainable development of their country and to adopt policies and strategies to that effect.

E. Parliament

9. **The Committee stresses the crucial role of the legislative power in ensuring the full implementation of the Convention (see the statement by the Committee on its relationship with parliamentarians; annex VI to A/65/38). It invites the House of Representatives, in line with its mandate, to take the necessary steps regarding the implementation of the present concluding observations between now and the submission of the next periodic report.**

F. Principal areas of concern and recommendations

Women and peace and security

10. The Committee commends the State party on its commitment to the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions on women and peace and security. It also welcomes the ongoing work of the bi-communal technical committee on gender equality and notes that a national action plan for the implementation of those resolutions in the period 2018–2021 is under preparation. It notes with concern, however, that:

(a) There is a lack of information on the financial resources earmarked for the implementation of the national action plan and the role of civil society, including women's groups, in its implementation and monitoring is not clearly defined;

(b) Women have generally been underrepresented and are not actively or meaningfully participating in continuing peace negotiation efforts;

(c) Women's priorities and experiences may not be fully integrated, as required under the Convention and Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

11. **In line with general recommendation No. 30 (2013) on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Expedite the adoption of the national action plan on women and peace and security and develop effective tools to implement it and measure its results;**

(b) **Ensure that sufficient financial resources are allocated to its women and peace and security agenda and the national action plan, in line with the recommendations of the global study on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000);**

(c) **Give the highest priority to the meaningful and inclusive participation of women at all stages of the peace process, as well as in transitional justice processes, in particular decision-making, at the national and local levels;**

(d) **Provide opportunities for women and civil society organizations, including local women's organizations, to contribute to the peace process as active participants by establishing effective channels of communication, coordination and joint initiatives for the inclusion of women's priorities.**

Refugee and asylum-seeking women

12. The Committee commends the State party for its sustained efforts to receive, host and provide protection and assistance to high numbers of persons fleeing armed conflict or persecution, including women and children. It is, however, concerned about:

(a) The lack of a gender-sensitive approach to the resolution of asylum applications;

(b) The lack of a comprehensive and harmonized framework, including clear procedures, guidelines and standards, for the identification of and provision of assistance to individuals with specific needs and vulnerabilities, especially women and girls who have been victims or are at risk of gender-based violence;

(c) The insufficient number of reception centres and the substandard conditions in existing centres, owing to the increasing number of refugees and asylum seekers entering the country.

13. **In line with its general recommendation No. 32 (2014) on the gender-related dimensions of refugee status, asylum, nationality and statelessness of women, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Amend its refugee law to put in place gender- and age sensitive individual screening and assessment procedures and thereby ensure the systematic and early identification of refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls with specific needs and vulnerabilities, in particular those who have been victims or are at risk of gender based violence;**

(b) **Increase the number of available places in reception centres and ensure adequate conditions for refugees and asylum seekers, with particular attention to the needs of women and girls;**

(c) **Strictly observe the principle of non-refoulement for all women and girls in need of international protection and ensure that no individual is expelled without an individual risk assessment.**

Constitutional and legislative framework

14. The Committee notes that, under article 28 (2) of the Constitution, direct and indirect discrimination on the basis of sex is prohibited and that sex-based discrimination is prohibited and gender equality promoted under various laws. It is, however, concerned about:

(a) The lack of comprehensive non-discrimination legislation and the limited effectiveness of the State party's anti-discrimination laws;

(b) The persistence of discriminatory provisions in the State party's constitutional and legislative framework, in particular article 2 (7) of the Constitution, according to which married women shall belong to the "community" to which their husband belongs and that children and young persons under the age of 21 who are not married shall belong to the "community" to which their father belongs.

15. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Adopt and effectively implement comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation that includes a definition of discrimination against women, encompassing direct and indirect discrimination in the public and private spheres in all areas covered by the Convention, in line with article 1 of the Convention;**

(b) **Repeal all remaining discriminatory provisions in its Constitution and ordinary legislation, in line with articles 1 and 2 of the Convention and target 5.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals, to end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.**

Access to justice

16. The Committee welcomes the measures taken to reduce obstacles to access by women to justice, including the complaint mechanisms available to women victims of gender-based discrimination or violence. It is concerned, however, about persisting barriers, in particular:

(a) Women's limited knowledge of their rights and available complaint mechanisms;

(b) Language barriers faced by migrant, asylum-seeking, refugee, internally displaced, Turkish Cypriot and Roma women claiming their rights;

(c) Women's limited access to free legal aid, in particular in the case of disadvantaged groups of women, such as migrants, asylum seekers and refugees;

(d) The lack of expertise regarding women's rights on the part of the judiciary, law enforcement officials and legal practitioners.

17. **The Committee, in line with its general recommendation No. 33 (2015) on women's access to justice, recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Enhance women's awareness of their rights and their means of claiming them, placing particular emphasis on the integration of education on women's rights and gender equality into school curricula at all levels, including legal literacy programmes;**

(b) **Institutionalize systems of legal aid and public defence that are accessible, sustainable and responsive to the needs of women in a timely, continuous and effective manner at all stages of judicial proceedings;**

(c) **Facilitate women's access to free legal aid, in particular for disadvantaged groups of women, and ensure adequate coverage, eligibility criteria and the quality of such services;**

(d) **Take immediate steps, including capacity-building and training programmes for the judiciary on the Convention and women's rights, to eliminate gender bias.**

National machinery for the advancement of women

18. The Committee welcomes the establishment of a number of new institutions and mechanisms to eliminate discrimination against women, in particular the Office of the Commissioner for Gender Equality. The Committee is, however, concerned about:

(a) The insufficient authority and visibility of the national machinery for the advancement of women, as well as the lack of adequate human, technical and financial resources allocated to it in order to coordinate and implement gender

equality plans, policies and programmes effectively in all areas and at all levels of government;

(b) The complexity of the national machinery and the lack of coordination between the existing components, resulting in overlapping responsibilities;

(c) The insufficient participation of all stakeholders in the discussions on strengthening the national machinery;

(d) The fact that the third national action plan on gender equality has not yet been adopted and that no time frame has been provided for its implementation.

19. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Increase the resources allocated to the national machinery for the advancement of women to ensure that a clear focus on women's rights is maintained and consider establishing an effective high-level mechanism for initiating, coordinating and implementing gender equality policies;**

(b) **Strengthen coordination between the various components of the national machinery by clearly defining their mandates and responsibilities in relation to women's rights, conduct regular monitoring and evaluation of such coordination and ensure that the national machinery is represented at the regional and local levels;**

(c) **Ensure the full and effective participation of all stakeholders in the discussions on strengthening the national machinery for the advancement of women;**

(d) **Expedite the adoption and effective implementation of the third national action plan on gender equality for the period 2018–2021 and ensure that gender mainstreaming is consistently applied in the formulation and implementation of all laws, regulations and programmes across all ministries and decentralized government structures.**

National human rights institution

20. The Committee notes that the Office of the Commissioner for Administration and Protection of Human Rights receives complaints from women about human rights violations. The Committee is concerned, however, that the Office was accredited with "B" status by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions in 2015.

21. **The Committee recommends that the State party take the necessary steps to bring the Office of the Commissioner for Administration and Protection of Human Rights fully into compliance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles), taking into consideration the recommendations of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, and ensure that the Office has a specific mandate on women's rights and gender equality.**

Temporary special measures

22. The Committee notes the measures taken to promote gender equality in decision-making positions and enhance women's employment and entrepreneurship. It also notes the decision of the Supreme Court to declare unconstitutional a law, adopted in 2016, introducing a statutory quota of 30 per cent for the representation of women or men on the boards of directors of semi-governmental organizations on the ground that it violated the constitutional principle of equality. The Committee is concerned about the lack of temporary special measures applied as part of a strategy to accelerate the achievement of substantive equality between women and men in

areas where women are underrepresented or disadvantaged, particularly in political and public life and in the labour market.

23. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Review its constitutional framework to allow for temporary special measures in order to enable women's full and equal participation in political and economic life, including on boards of directors;**

(b) **Consider applying quotas and other forms of temporary special measures, in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation No. 25 (2004) on temporary special measures, in all areas covered by the Convention where women are underrepresented or disadvantaged, in particular in political and public life and in the labour market;**

(c) **Raise awareness among members of the parliament, government officials, the judiciary, members of political parties and the public of the non-discriminatory nature of temporary special measures.**

Stereotypes and harmful practices

24. The Committee notes the State party's efforts to combat discriminatory gender stereotypes, including through the establishment of the Committee on the Elimination of Stereotypes and Social Prejudices. Nevertheless, it notes with concern:

(a) The deep-rooted discriminatory stereotypes concerning the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society, perpetuating traditional roles of women as mothers and housewives and undermining their social status and educational and career prospects;

(b) The limited measures taken to fully eliminate stereotypes in the education system;

(c) That the media and the advertising sector continue to portray stereotypes of women;

(d) The exposure of women and girls to intersecting forms of discrimination owing to their ethnicity, disability, migrant status or other characteristics;

(e) That information in the State party on harmful practices, including child and forced marriage and female genital mutilation and how to combat them, is not readily accessible to many women.

25. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Put in place a comprehensive strategy with proactive and sustained measures to eliminate and modify discriminatory gender stereotypes, with a particular focus on women belonging to minority groups, who are often the target of hate speech and racially motivated violence, by revising textbooks and curricula and conducting awareness-raising campaigns directed at women and men in general and at the media and advertising agencies specifically;**

(b) **Engage with relevant actors and, whenever possible, use innovative measures to enhance a positive and non-stereotypical portrayal of women in the media and in advertising;**

(c) **Systematically collect disaggregated data on harmful practices and the related legal sanctions imposed on perpetrators in the State party, and make information on ways to combat such practices widely available.**

Gender-based violence against women

26. The Committee welcomes the measures taken to combat domestic violence, including the adoption of the second national action plan for the prevention and combating of violence in the family for the period 2017–2019. The Committee remains concerned, however, about:

(a) The prevalence of gender-based violence against women, in particular domestic and sexual violence, which remains largely underreported and undocumented;

(b) The absence of comprehensive legislation to criminalize all forms of gender-based violence against women;

(c) The low rates of prosecution and conviction and the lenient penalties imposed on perpetrators of gender-based violence against women;

(d) The insufficient availability and quality of assistance and protection services, including shelters, for women who are victims of violence;

(e) The lack of statistical data on gender-based violence against women, disaggregated by sex, age, nationality and the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator, as well as on investigations, prosecutions, convictions and sentences imposed on perpetrators and reparations provided to victims.

27. **Recalling the provisions of the Convention and its general recommendation No. 35 (2017) on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19 (1992) on violence against women, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Enforce the Violence in the Family (Prevention and Protection of Victims) (Amendment) Law and ensure that reports of gender-based violence against women, including domestic violence, are duly investigated, that perpetrators prosecuted and adequately punished and that victims have access to appropriate redress, including compensation;**

(b) **Expedite the adoption of the bill criminalizing all forms of gender-based violence against women, incorporating the Istanbul Convention into national law, and the bill on harassment and stalking;**

(c) **Ensure that adequate human, technical and financial resources are allocated to the Advisory Committee for the Prevention and Combating of Violence in the Family for the systematic and effective implementation, monitoring and assessment of the second national action plan for the prevention and combating of violence in the family for the period 2017–2019;**

(d) **Encourage victims of gender-based violence against women to report their cases and provide capacity-building programmes for judges, prosecutors, police officers and other law enforcement officials on the strict application of the relevant criminal law provisions and on the gender-sensitive investigation of such cases;**

(e) **Reinforce the protection and assistance provided to women who are victims of gender-based violence, including by increasing the number and geographical coverage of shelters, ensuring the availability of psychosocial rehabilitation and reintegration programmes, allocating adequate human, technical and financial resources and enhancing State cooperation with *non-governmental organizations* that provide shelter and rehabilitation to victims;**

(f) **Systematically collect data on all forms of gender-based violence against women, disaggregated by sex, age, nationality and the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator, as well as on investigations, prosecutions, convictions and sentences imposed on perpetrators and reparations provided to victims.**

Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

28. The Committee welcomes the adoption in 2014 of the Prevention and Combating of Trafficking in and Exploitation of Human Beings and Protection of Victims Law and the implementation of the national action plan against trafficking in human beings for the period 2016–2018. It remains concerned, however, about the prevalence of trafficking in women and girls to the State party and their subsequent labour and sexual exploitation, especially in the context of recent migration flows. It is also concerned about:

(a) The limited enforcement of the anti-trafficking law, as reflected by low rates of prosecution and conviction in cases of trafficking in women and girls;

(b) The lack of information on the resources allocated to the Multidisciplinary Coordinating Group for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and on its capacity to coordinate and monitor the action of the Government in combating trafficking;

(c) Reports that victims of trafficking are sometimes arrested, detained and deported for acts committed as a consequence of having been trafficked;

(d) The lack of systematic rehabilitation and reintegration measures, counselling, medical treatment, psychological support and redress, including compensation, for victims of trafficking, in particular those who are unable or unwilling to cooperate with the prosecution authorities in proceedings against traffickers;

(e) The insufficient number and coverage of shelters for victims of trafficking;

(f) The insufficient monitoring of private employment agencies despite their reported involvement in trafficking networks;

(g) The limited access to data on victims of trafficking, disaggregated by sex, age and nationality;

(h) The high number of migrant women exploited in prostitution who are exposed to sexual and physical violence;

(i) The lack of alternative income opportunities and exit programmes for women and girls wishing to leave prostitution;

(j) The lack of information and data on migrant women who might be compelled or coerced into surrogacy.

29. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Ensure the effective enforcement of anti-trafficking legislation, including by providing judges, prosecutors, border police, immigration authorities and other law enforcement officials with mandatory training in its gender-sensitive application;**

(b) **Investigate, prosecute and punish all cases of trafficking in persons, especially women and girls, and ensure that the sentences imposed on perpetrators are commensurate with the gravity of the crime;**

(c) **Ensure that the multidisciplinary coordinating group for combating trafficking in human beings is provided with adequate human, technical and**

financial resources to implement the national action plan against trafficking in human beings for the period 2016–2018, to ensure inter-agency coordination among government security, justice and social services entities in efforts to combat trafficking, and to strengthen their cooperation with civil society; evaluate the impact of the implementation of the national action plan and adopt a new action plan;

(d) **Ensure, through its national referral mechanism, the early identification and referral of victims of trafficking in order for them to receive adequate support and protection;**

(e) **Ensure that women who are victims of trafficking and exploitation of prostitution, irrespective of their ethnic, national or social background and legal status, are exempted from any liability;**

(f) **Ensure that all victims of trafficking, irrespective of their ethnic, national or social background and legal status, as well as of their ability or willingness to cooperate in the legal proceedings against traffickers, obtain effective protection and redress, including rehabilitation and compensation;**

(g) **Increase the number and coverage of shelters for victims of trafficking and provide them with adequate access to health care and counselling;**

(h) **Take effective measures to strictly enforce existing legislation pertaining to private employment agencies and monitor their activities, with a view to preventing the trafficking of migrant women, including domestic workers, and ratify the International Labour Organization (ILO) Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997 (No. 181);**

(i) **Pursue international, regional and bilateral cooperation efforts with countries of origin, transit and destination, including through information exchange and the harmonization of procedures, to prevent trafficking and bring perpetrators to justice;**

(j) **Improve access to data on victims of trafficking, disaggregated by sex, age and nationality;**

(k) **Combat the exploitation of women, in particular migrant women, in prostitution;**

(l) **Strengthen the assistance provided to women and girls who wish to leave prostitution, including by providing exit programmes and alternative income-generating opportunities;**

(m) **Conduct a study to identify the number of migrant women being forced or coerced into surrogacy and address the phenomenon.**

Participation in political and public life

30. The Committee welcomes the fact that gender parity has been achieved among judges at the national level and notes the increase in the representation of women in decision-making positions in the public service. It further notes that most political parties have introduced quotas to enhance the participation of women in political and public life. It remains, however, concerned that:

(a) Women are still underrepresented in the parliament and municipal councils, in the Cabinet and as mayors, in decision-making positions in the diplomatic service, and in peace negotiations;

(b) The introduction of targets and quotas in the strategic action plan on gender equality for the period 2014–2017 for the participation of women in political and public life has not produced any concrete results;

(c) Women in politics are faced with negative cultural attitudes and gender stereotypes in the public sphere;

(d) There is a lack of systematic data collection to monitor progress in efforts to increase the representation of women in political and public life.

31. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Strengthen the representation of women in decision-making positions in political life, particularly in the parliament and on municipal councils, in the Cabinet and as mayors, in the diplomatic service and in peace negotiations, with a view to reaching the targets and quotas included in the national action plan on gender equality;**

(b) **To that end, adopt targeted measures, including temporary special measures, such as a statutory quota for women's representation on the electoral lists of political parties and a gender parity system for the accelerated recruitment and appointment of women to decision-making positions in the public administration;**

(c) **Intensify campaigns to raise the awareness of politicians, journalists, teachers and the public of the fact that the full, equal, free and democratic participation of women on an equal basis with men in political and public life is a requirement for the full implementation of women's human rights;**

(d) **Train women in leadership, campaigning and constituency-building to prepare them as candidates;**

(e) **Put in place a comprehensive strategy with proactive and sustained measures to eliminate and modify negative cultural attitudes and gender stereotypes facing women in politics;**

(f) **Systematically collect data to monitor the progress of women's representation in political and public life.**

Nationality

32. The Committee notes that every woman who gives birth to a child in the State party is entitled to obtain a birth certificate for her child, regardless of her migration status. It is, however, concerned that migrant women, in particular those in an irregular situation, are reluctant to approach the relevant authorities, which may increase the risk of statelessness for their children.

33. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Disseminate information on the right of migrant women, including those in an irregular situation, to obtain birth certificates for their children and facilitate the delivery of birth certificates to undocumented migrant women for their children born in the State party;**

(b) **Accede to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.**

Education

34. The Committee welcomes the high enrolment rate of women and girls at all levels of education, in particular tertiary education. It also welcomes the measures taken to overcome gender-stereotyped educational and vocational choices, as well as

the inclusion of education on sexual and reproductive health and rights, through health education as a compulsory subject. It further notes with appreciation the efforts to combat violence and harassment in schools. The Committee is concerned, however, about:

(a) The concentration of girls in traditionally female-dominated fields of study and career paths and their underrepresentation in vocational training and in certain fields of higher education, including technology and engineering;

(b) The continued horizontal segregation with regard to participation by women in the natural sciences, engineering and technology-related research;

(c) The lack of information on whether the education on sexual and reproductive health and rights provided to pupils from pre-school to secondary school is comprehensive and age-appropriate, in line with the Committee's general recommendation No. 36 (2017) on the right of girls and women to education;

(d) The high number of girls who suffer from discrimination and sexual harassment in schools and the disproportionate number of Turkish Cypriot, migrant, refugee, asylum-seeking and Roma girls, as well as pregnant girls and girls with disabilities, who continue to face difficulties in gaining access to high-quality education, despite the efforts made by the State party.

35. **In line with its general recommendation No. 36, the Committee draws attention to target 4.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals and recommends that the State party ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and high-quality primary and secondary education. It also recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Strengthen its strategies to address discriminatory stereotypes and structural barriers that may deter girls from enrolling in traditionally male-dominated fields of study, including technology and engineering;**

(b) **Ensure that education on sexual and reproductive health and rights provided to girls and boys is comprehensive and age-appropriate;**

(c) **Implement a zero-tolerance policy in all schools on violence and harassment in schools, including cyber-bullying and online gender-based violence, that incorporates counselling services, awareness-raising efforts and effective reporting mechanisms;**

(d) **Continue to combat discrimination that hinders access by disadvantaged groups of women and girls to high-quality education, including through the adoption of temporary special measures, such as scholarships and the provision of free textbooks.**

Employment

36. The Committee welcomes the adoption of measures to support the participation of women in the labour market and reduce the gender pay gap and occupational segregation. The Committee is, however, concerned about:

(a) The disproportionately high unemployment rate among women, including young and highly educated women, and the low number of female entrepreneurs compared with their male counterparts;

(b) Continuing horizontal and vertical occupational segregation and the concentration of women in part-time and low-paid jobs;

(c) The persistent gender wage gap, particularly in the private sector, which, among other things, has an adverse effect on women's pension benefits;

(d) The persistent discrimination in the labour market against mothers and pregnant women in relation to hiring, career advancement, conditions of employment, pay and denial of paid maternity leave, particularly in the private sector, and, despite the new legislation on paternity leave, the periods of parental leave taken by men, which remain insignificant;

(e) The limited access to the labour market for migrant, asylum-seeking, refugee, older, Roma and Turkish Cypriot women, as well as women with disabilities and other marginalized groups of women;

(f) The prevalence of sexual harassment in the workplace and the lack of effective measures to deal with such harassment and to inform women of their rights.

37. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Adopt measures, including temporary special measures, to achieve substantive equality of women and men in the labour market, including for highly qualified women, and establish special training programmes and counselling for unemployed women, including on the promotion of women's entrepreneurship;**

(b) **Intensify efforts to provide skills training and incentives for women to pursue non-traditional career paths in fields such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics, and eliminate occupational segregation, both horizontal and vertical, in the public and private sectors;**

(c) **Strictly enforce the Equal Pay for Men and Women for Equal Work or Work of Equal Value (Amendment) Law, including by imposing sanctions for non-compliance, and adopt further measures to close the gender wage gap, including through gender-neutral analytical job classification and evaluation methods and regular pay surveys;**

(d) **Increase women's access to full-time employment, including by accelerating the equal sharing of domestic and family tasks between women and men, increasing the number and quality of childcare facilities and boosting incentives for men to avail themselves of paternity leave;**

(e) **Enforce the Equal Treatment of Men and Women in Employment and Vocational Training (Amendment) Law and the Protection of Maternity (Amendment) Law to ensure that mothers and pregnant women are not discriminated against in relation to hiring, career advancement, conditions of employment, pay and denial of paid maternity leave, particularly in the private sector;**

(f) **Adopt measures, including temporary special measures, to accelerate the equal participation of disadvantaged groups of women in the labour market;**

(g) **Develop a safe system for filing complaints relating to sexual harassment in the workplace and ensure that victims have access to effective mechanisms and remedies.**

Women migrant domestic workers

38. The Committee is concerned about:

(a) The continued exploitation faced by women migrant domestic workers and the difficulties they encounter in changing employers;

(b) The obstacles impeding access to justice for women migrant domestic workers, including the fear of detention and deportation while legal proceedings are pending;

(c) The lack of regular labour inspections to monitor the working conditions and employment contracts of women migrant domestic workers.

39. **The Committee, in line with its general recommendation No. 26 (2008) on women migrant workers, recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Adopt a specific law regulating domestic employment, with adequate sanctions for employers engaging in abusive practices;**

(b) **Continue to raise awareness among women migrant domestic workers of their rights under the Convention, including in a language that they can understand, and monitor the activities of employment agencies;**

(c) **Enforce the right of women migrant domestic workers to change employers legally and ensure regular labour inspections of workplaces and employment contracts;**

(d) **Establish effective complaint procedures to enable women migrant domestic workers to lodge complaints against their employers without fear of reprisals, arrest, detention or deportation;**

(e) **Strengthen the welfare services and assistance provided to women migrant domestic workers who are victims of abuse and exploitation, including legal assistance, medical and psychosocial care and adequate shelters, and ensure that such services and assistance are gender-responsive and accessible to all women migrant domestic workers, including those who are undocumented;**

(f) **Ratify the ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189).**

Health

40. The Committee welcomes the adoption of the strategic plan on health care for the period 2016–2018, the strategic plan on sexual and reproductive health, in 2017, and the law decriminalizing abortion. It is, however, concerned about:

(a) The delay in implementing the national health insurance system, which has an adverse impact on the ability of low-income groups of women to obtain access to health-care services, despite the measures taken by the State party;

(b) The limited access to contraceptives, in particular modern contraceptives, especially for girls and disadvantaged groups of women;

(c) The lack of clear regulations and protocols to ensure the effective implementation of the new law on abortion, the insufficient availability of abortion services in public hospitals and the high cost of such services in private clinics, the lack of pre- and post-abortion counselling services in public and private hospitals and the lack of training for health-care providers on the application of the new law.

41. **The Committee, recalling its general recommendation No. 24 (1999) on women and health, recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Ensure universal access to health-care services for all women through the implementation of the national health insurance system, as planned for 2019;**

(b) **Ensure the availability and accessibility of affordable modern forms of contraception and reproductive health services for all women and girls;**

(c) **Fully apply the law decriminalizing abortion, including through the adoption of clear regulations and protocols, provide regular training to health-care providers on the law's application and adopt procedures to guarantee access to abortion services and pre- and post-abortion counselling services in public and private hospitals.**

Economic empowerment of women

42. The Committee is concerned that:

(a) The State party's financial secrecy policies, legislation on corporate reporting and taxation practices might have an adverse impact on the ability of other States, in particular those already short of revenue, to mobilize maximum resources for the realization of women's rights;

(b) Women are still underrepresented in decision-making positions and on boards of directors of the largest publicly listed companies;

(c) The regulations of some insurance companies stipulate that a wife can be registered as a dependent person on her husband's insurance policy, while a husband cannot be registered as a dependent person on his wife's insurance policy;

(d) Women's representation on the decision-making bodies of sports associations remains low compared with that of men.

43. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Undertake independent, participatory and periodic impact assessments of the extraterritorial effects of its financial secrecy and corporate tax policies and its commercial activities on women's rights within the State party and on the ability of third States to mobilize maximum resources for the advancement of women's rights;**

(b) **Adopt measures, including temporary special measures, to strengthen the representation of women in company decision-making positions and on boards of directors;**

(c) **Prohibit all discriminatory provisions in insurance companies' policies;**

(d) **Pursue its efforts to achieve substantive gender equality in sports management, including through the use of incentives for women in sports, as athletes and in managerial positions, in collaboration with civil society organizations.**

Gender and climate change

44. The Committee notes the risk assessment project on climate change carried out by the State party. However, it requires additional information on whether the State party plans to adopt a climate action plan and how it intends to ensure the participation of women in its development and to apply a gender perspective in the identification of adaptation and mitigation measures.

45. **The Committee draws attention to its general recommendation No. 37 (2018) on the gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change and recommends that the State party adopt a climate action plan and ensure the participation of women in its development and implementation, thus incorporating a gender perspective into adaptation and mitigation efforts.**

Disadvantaged groups of women

Rural women

46. The Committee welcomes the adoption of the rural development programme for the period 2014–2020, whereby women can apply for support on equal terms with

men. It is, however, concerned about the lack of information on specific programmes to assist rural women, especially those who participate in the labour force.

47. **The Committee recommends that the State party increase incentives, including tax incentives, to encourage the development of businesses in rural areas in order to enhance employment opportunities for and the autonomy of rural women. It also recommends that the State party promote science, technology, including e-technology, mathematics and engineering programmes in rural areas in order to bridge the technological gap between urban and rural areas.**

Migrant women

48. The Committee notes that migrants who are members of the family of a Cypriot or European Union citizen are entitled to a temporary residence permit. It is, however, concerned that:

(a) To obtain such a permit, migrant women are required to meet several criteria, such as a declaration from their husbands to the effect that they assume responsibility for their living, medical and other expenses, which can create a relationship of dependency;

(b) Migrant women who have a residence permit may face difficulty in obtaining access to family courts because of the costs involved.

49. **In line with general recommendation No. 26, the Committee recommends that the State party amend the above-mentioned provisions in order to reduce migrant women's dependency on their partners and facilitate their access to family courts, with a view to protecting them from being trapped in abusive relationships.**

Marriage and family relations

50. The Committee commends the State party for implementing two of its previous recommendations, namely the adoption of the Civil Union Law and the conduct of a study on the economic consequences of separation and divorce on both spouses (CEDAW/C/CYP/CO/6-7, para. 36). It remains, however, concerned about:

(a) The apparent lack of adequate protection for children born to or adopted in the context of de facto and other civil unions;

(b) The legal presumption that the "stay-at-home" spouse (usually the wife) contributes to only one third of the property acquired by the spouse who works for wages outside the home (usually the husband).

51. **The Committee recommends that the State party, in line with general recommendations No. 21 (1994) on equality in marriage and family relations and No. 29 (2013) on the economic consequences of marriage, family relations and their dissolution, expeditiously adopt the seven bills amending the family law, with the objective of:**

(a) **Ensuring adequate protection for children born to or adopted in the context of de facto and other civil unions;**

(b) **Ensuring that women enjoy adequate legal protection in de facto unions and upon their dissolution;**

(c) **Setting the legal presumption of each spouse's contribution to property acquired during marriage at 50 per cent.**

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

52. **The Committee calls upon the State party to use the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in its efforts to implement the provisions of the Convention.**

Dissemination

53. **The Committee requests the State party to ensure the timely dissemination of the present concluding observations, in the official languages of the State party, to the relevant State institutions at all levels (national, regional and local), in particular to the Government, the ministries, the parliament and the judiciary, to enable their full implementation.**

Ratification of other treaties

54. **The Committee notes that the adherence of the State party to the nine major international human rights instruments[1] would enhance the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms in all aspects of life. The Committee therefore encourages the State party to ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, to which it is not yet a party.**

Follow-up to the concluding observations

55. **The Committee requests the State party to provide, within two years, written information on the steps taken to implement the recommendations contained in paragraphs 11 (c), 19 (d), 27 (b) and 39 (c) above.**

Preparation of the next report

56. **The Committee invites the State party to submit its ninth periodic report in July 2022. The report should be submitted on time and cover the entire period up to the time of its submission.**

57. **The Committee requests the State party to follow the harmonized guidelines on reporting under the international human rights treaties, including guidelines on a common core document and treaty-specific documents (see HRI/GEN/2/Rev.6, chap. I).**

[1] The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families; the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance; and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.